

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 29, 2010

WASHINGTON - Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will make a previously unscheduled stop in China Saturday to consult with Dai Bingguo, State Councilor of the People's Republic of China. The two will reportedly discuss a number of pressing bilateral and strategic issues, including President Hu Jintao's January 2011 visit.

USCIRF urges the Secretary to expand on some of her recent statements about the importance of human rights to U.S.-China relations and to raise universal human rights and religious freedom concerns prominently and publicly, as well as work to build international consensus on China's poor human rights record, as the Administration has done recently on economic and security issues.

"China's blatant disregard for individual freedoms should be viewed as a direct challenge to core U.S. and universal principles. It also negatively affects our security and economic relationship," said Leonard Leo, USCIRF Chair. "Secretary Clinton has said recently that when the world needs a human rights champion the U.S. should 'not just.. engage but...lead.' We urge her to use her upcoming meeting to clearly demonstrate U.S. leadership on human rights and religious freedom."

Despite reports of growing religious adherence and positive public statements from President Hu Jintao about the role religious communities can play in society, religious freedom conditions overall in China continue to be among the world's worst. In China's western regions, particularly among Uighurs and Tibetans, the religious freedom situation is bleak, as the government has increased control of religious communities and detained and jailed religious leaders and others viewed as challenging government authority after demonstrations lead to violence in 2008 and 2009. Unregistered Protestants have faced short-term detentions, property destructions, and other harassment, and there continue to be unregistered Catholic

priests and bishops in prison or disappeared. Religious content on the internet continues to be blocked on political grounds.

In recent weeks, Chinese authorities blocked 200 Protestants from attending an international religious conference on national security grounds, detaining and injuring some of those seeking to leave. There continue to be credible reports of torture faced by Falun Gong adherents held in custody, including allegations of detention and abuse in psychiatric facilities. In addition, many of the drafters of Charter '08, the movement for which Liu Xiaobo gained the Nobel Prize, have come under increased pressure, including home detentions and harassment, in recent weeks. Among other human rights and democracy provisions, Charter '08 included a recommendation to end all restrictions on the freedom of religion and belief in China.

“The sheer number and scope of human rights related abuses in China are staggering,” said Leo. “China must realize that on a number of global issues, the continued abuse of universal freedoms, including the repression of millions of peaceful religious believers, breeds distrust among its neighbors, hurts their international image, and damages U.S.-China relations.”

USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission. USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and the leadership of both political parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives. USCIRF’s principal responsibilities are to review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and to make policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress.

To interview a USCIRF Commissioner, contact Tom Carter, Communications Director at tcarter@uscirf.gov, or (202) 523-3257.